



Human Services Committee Hearing
February 7th, 2023

Testimony of Jordan Fairchild,
Coordinator and Community Organizer,
Keep The Promise Coalition

In Support of S.B. 82 and H.B. 5321

Good afternoon Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Jordan Fairchild, I live in Hartford, and I am the Coordinator and Community Organizer for Keep The Promise Coalition (KTP), a grassroots group of CT advocates with lived experience of mental health conditions, addiction, and co-occurring disabilities.

S.B. 82 - An Act Eliminating Income And Asset Limits For The Medconnect Health Insurance Program For Working Persons With Disabilities

Keep The Promise Coalition supports S.B. 82. This bill would remove the income and asset limits for MED-Connect, the health insurance program for working people with disabilities.

I personally know a lot of working people with disabilities. The work they do is invaluable. I could not do my job without Holly, KTP's Office Administrator, who has done such tremendous advocacy work. My friend Karen works at an animal shelter. In fact, *many* of the people I work with **are people with disabilities**. They make our state a better place. They take care of Connecticut, and Connecticut should return the favor.

MED-Connect provides many of them with the same coverage that Medicaid would. This includes coverage for dental, vision and hearing, and very importantly, coverage for things like medical transportation and home health aides—critical services for people with disabilities.

Regardless of income people with disabilities shouldn't have to be saddled with the burden of additional costs not covered by other insurance plans, just because they have a disability. **Therefore, removing the income and asset limits from this program would promote equity for people with disabilities.** It would allow them to save for a rainy day or for emergencies, and grow financially. KTP supports S.B. 82.

It is also common that someone will become unable to work due to their disability. When that happens, they will likely struggle to qualify for HUSKY C, the Medicaid program for people

KEEP THE PROMISE COALITION

31 DeJohn Drive, Middletown CT 06457
E-Mail: jfairchild_KTP@cahs.org

Cell: 203-241-7986 Office: 860-788-6180
Website: www.ctkeepthepromise.com

with disabilities who cannot work. It provides the same coverage as MED-Connect. HUSKY C has extremely low income and asset limits, which are a barrier to people who need the coverage it provides. These programs are two sides of the same coin, and this critical MED-Connect reform must be complemented by the parallel efforts to reform HUSKY C.

H.B. 5321 - An Act Establishing A State Ombudsman's Office For Behavioral Healthcare Coverage.

Keep The Promise Coalition supports H.B. 5321. The bill would create a State Ombudsman's Office, similar to the Office of the Healthcare Advocate, to reduce barriers to behavioral health care and make policy recommendations to expand behavioral health care opportunities in relation to insurance.

Barriers to care are barriers to recovery. When payments are denied or delayed, providers limit their client base. Some stop taking insurance. These barriers defeat the purpose of paying for behavioral health coverage, and limit people's access to care. This is especially harmful to people receiving services from independent providers, who lack advocates to correct these issues. While the legislature works to address insurance-related barriers to care, the idea to create an ombudsman's office to act as an advocate for people who encounter these barriers would help improve access to care, and therefore help improve behavioral health outcomes. KTP supports H.B. 5321.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony,

Jordan Fairchild,
Coordinator and Community Organizer,
Keep The Promise Coalition

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